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FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000631

STATE FOR EAP/PIMBS
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CINCPAC FOR J-5 AND FPA AMB TEARE

E.O. 12598: DECL: 07/28/2007
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SUBJECT: VICE ADMIRAL NATTER'S MEETING WITH THE
SULTAN OF BRUNEI, JULY 29, 1997

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR GLEN R. RASE, REASONS
1.5 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

[1](#)2. SUMMARY: SULTAN BOLKIAH EXPRESSED HIS DEEP APPRECIATION FOR THE U.S. DEFENSE UMBRELLA IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, CHARACTERIZING IT AS ESSENTIAL TO THE REGION'S PEACE AND PROSPERITY. HE ALSO EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE BROADER U.S.-BRUNEI BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. ADMIRAL NATTER EXPLAINED THE USG'S CURRENT DEFENSE PROFILE IN ASIA AND EXCHANGED VIEWS ON HOW TO IMPROVE SECURITY RELATIONS WITH CHINA. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, SULTAN BOLKIAH COMMENTED ON THE EXCELLENT RELATIONS THAT EXIST BETWEEN BRUNEI AND THE U.S. HE WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED BY THE GROWING MILITARY-TO-MILITARY TIES. THE SULTAN SAID THAT HE HAS ALWAYS VIEWED THE U.S. PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AS ESSENTIAL TO THE REGION'S PEACE AND PROSPERITY. HE SAID THAT HE WELCOMES OUR ROLE IN ASIA AND WAS CERTAIN THAT SOUTHEAST ASIA'S OTHER LEADERS SHARE THIS VIEW, IF NOT ALWAYS PUBLICALLY.

[1](#)4. ADMIRAL NATTER SAID THAT THE USG WELCOMES THE OPPORTUNITY TO COOPERATE WITH BRUNEI'S ARMED FORCES AND VERY MUCH APPRECIATES BRUNEI'S OPEN EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. PRESENCE IN ASIA. HE NOTED BY WAY OF EXAMPLE OF THE U.S. ROLE THAT U.S. NAVY AND MARINES ARE PREPARED FOR ACTION IN CAMBODIA TO PROTECT AMERICAN CITIZENS AND TO ASSIST IN EVACUATION IF THAT BECOMES A NECESSITY. THE ADMIRAL ADDED THAT THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS NOW SEEMS TO BE OVER AND WE HAVE HAD NO NEED TO CALL ON THE NAVY AND MARINES. BUT THEY ARE READY IF NEEDED. THE SULTAN SAID THAT HE VERY MUCH APPRECIATES THE USG'S QUICK RESPONSE TO THE RECENT EVENTS IN CAMBODIA.

[1](#)5. ADMIRAL NATTER COMMENTED THAT HIS PRIORITY AREA OF CONCERN IS MONITORING EVENTS IN NORTH KOREA. HOWEVER, CHINA REMAINS THE ISSUE OF LONG-TERM CONCERN. THE ADMIRAL SAID THE USG GOAL IS TO MAINTAIN OUR STRENGTH IN ASIA WHILE BUILDING CLOSER, MORE COOPERATIVE TIES WITH CHINA. CHINA REMAINS SUSPICIOUS OF THE U.S. MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH JAPAN AND SEEMS UNWILLING TO BELIEVE THAT OUR AGREEMENTS WITH JAPAN LIMIT THEIR NEED TO BUILD AND PROJECT GREATER MILITARY STRENGTH -- SOMETHING CHINA WOULD NOT WELCOME. HE ASKED FOR THE SULTAN'S VIEWS ON HOW TO WORK WITH CHINA.

[1](#)6. THE SULTAN SAID THAT CHINA IS HEAVILY FOCUSED ON DOMESTIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND

WANTS NOTHING TO INTERFERE WITH GROWTH. THEY SEE ANY STRONG MILITARY IN THE REGION AS A POTENTIAL THREAT THAT HAS TO BE COUNTERED. HE FELT THAT THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH CHINA'S LEADERS IS THROUGH CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA THAT THE U.S. AND CHINA (AND JAPAN) WORK TOWARDS MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. THE SULTAN ARGUED THAT AS CHINA GROWS ECONOMICALLY, IT WILL HAVE A GREATER INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA'S STABILITY?

¶7. IN CLOSING, ADMIRAL NATTER INVITED THE SULTAN TO VISIT ONE OF TWO AIRCRAFT CARRIERS THAT WILL BE IN THE REGION OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. SULTAN BOLKIAH SAID HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED IF THE TIMING CAN BE WORKED OUT.

¶8. THE U.S. ATTENDEES FOR THE MEETING WERE VICE ADMIRAL NATTER, AMBASSADOR RASE AND COMMANDER PORTER. THE SULTAN WAS SUPPORTED BY HIS MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, PEHIN ISA (WHO TRANSLATED FOR THE SULTAN), ACTING ROYAL BRUNEI ARMED FORCES COMMANDER, GENERAL ABIDIN, AND THE PERM SEC FOR POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION, PEHIN ABDUL RAHMAN.

RASE